

**Revelation**  
**Lesson XI**  
**Revelation 17:1-20:10**

**Babylon the Great is Fallen!**

**Introduction:**

1. With the pouring out of the seven bowls of the wrath of God, divine judgment against Rome has been pictured in Apocalypse.
  - a. The judgment began as a general judgment on that wicked nation. Rev. 16:1-9
  - b. The final three bowls were particularly intended to call attention to God's wrath against the capital city itself. Rev. 16:10-21
2. Chapters 17-18 show the fall of the Imperial City in great detail.
3. Rev. 19:1-10 shows the rejoicing of the redeemed over the fall of Rome.
4. Rev. 19:11-20:10 shows the final fate of Satan, the beast and the false prophet.
5. Taken together, these four chapters show how complete and devastating the overthrow of "Babylon" was to be.

**Body of Lesson:**

**I. The Vision of the Great Harlot: Rev. 17:1-18**

**A. One of the seven angels of wrath invited John to a closer inspection of the fate befalling Babylon (i.e. Rome).**

**B. The "great harlot" is Imperial Rome. Cf. Rev. 17:18**

1. The kings of the earth had committed fornication with her through their economic, military, cultural, and particularly religious alliances with Rome.
2. Fornication/harlotry is often used in Scripture as a symbol for idolatry and spiritual apostasy. Nah. 3:1-4; Isa. 23:15; Jer. 3
3. In one sense she sat "upon many waters" (i.e. was secure); in another she dwelled in a "wilderness" (i.e. was desolated). Rev. 17:1,3

**C. The woman was "sitting upon a scarlet-colored beast, full of names of blasphemy, having seven heads and ten horns."**

1. The beast has already been identified in the book of Revelation as a way of referring to the emperorship of Rome.
2. The picture of the harlot sitting upon the beast reminds us that the city of Rome owes her position to the emperor as head of the powerful state of Rome.

**D. A description of the great harlot. Rev. 17:4-6**

1. Her dress indicates her wealth and splendor.
2. The golden cup from which she drank was loved by her, but seen as an abomination by John.
3. She had her name written on her forehead.
  - a. Charles says it was characteristic of the prostitutes of Rome to have their names on their foreheads.
  - b. Her name indicates that her evils are great enough to have compromised many more than just herself.

**E. Rome enjoyed and was intoxicated by her history of persecutions against the church. Rev. 17:6**

**F. The angel explained this vision to John. Rev. 17:8-18**

1. It is doubtful that the “seven kings” can be identified by name; “seven” may simply represent the totality of the emperor’s power.
2. Conquered countries and allies of Rome which have participated in her evils will share her fate.
3. At verse 16, Rome’s fate at the hands of her former allies when the tide of history turns against her is predicted; there would be a great “falling out among thieves”.
4. Verses 16-17 show how Rome’s judgment in history would be accomplished (i.e. at the hands of other nations); God’s providence overrules all human affairs.

## **II. The Doom of Babylon the Great: Rev. 18:1-24**

**A. “This chapter, which deals with the doom of Rome, opens with a prophetic prelude, in which the Seer looks far forward and sees the destruction of Rome as already accomplished, and the earth’s proud capital as the haunt of every unclean thing – both demonic and belonging to this world” (Charles).**

1. An angel announces that Babylon is fallen and desolated.
2. The reason for her overthrow is cited in verse 3: her own sin and seducing others into the same abominations.

**B. The people of God are warned to separate themselves completely from Babylon. Rev. 18:4-8**

1. Appeal: “come out...have no fellowship with her sins.”
2. Warning: You will share in her plagues if you share in her sins.

**C. The grief of the unredeemed over the fall of Babylon. Rev. 18:9-20**

1. Notice that those who have shared in the fornications of this harlot mourn only for their own sake; sinners have few friends when pleasure turns to pain.
2. That Rome’s judgment came “in one hour” underscores the sudden and unexpected nature of the empire’s degeneration and fall.
3. The reaction of the righteous to the fall of Rome is given at verse 20.

**D. The end of Rome is pictured in Rev. 18:21-24.**

1. The symbolic act of the angel in verse 21 is a dramatic gesture. Cf. Jer. 51:63-64
2. The reason for such a fate is stated in verse 24; Babylon has shed the blood of prophets and saints.

## **III. The Response of Heaven to the Fall of Babylon: Rev. 19:1-10**

**A. With Babylon justly judged and overthrown, there is a mighty chorus of thanksgiving and praise to God in heaven.**

1. Salvation, glory and power are seen belonging to God and not to Rome.
2. Rome’s destruction leaves only a smoking ruin – like ancient Sodom and Gomorrah. Rev. 19:3

**B. “For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigneth”. Rev. 19:6**

1. With Rome overthrown, God’s reign in human history becomes obvious.
2. God had been in control all along, but many had lost sight of this truth due to the persecutions which had raged.

**C. “The marriage of the Lamb is come.” Rev. 19:7**

1. This figure is rooted in the Old Testament imagery of God and Israel. Hos. 2:19; Isa. 54:18; Ezek. 16:7
2. In the New Testament, the bride of Christ is his church. Eph. 5:22-23
3. In some ways, this is the climactic scene of the Apocalypse: Lamb’s wife has made herself ready by her faithfulness.
4. The beautiful apparel of the bride contrasts with that of the harlot in Rev. 18:16.

**D. The faithful of the ages are bidden to share in the wedding feast of the lamb. Rev. 19:9**

**E. John’s awe at such a scene caused him to bow before the angel to worship him.**

1. It was forbidden by the angel.
2. The angel declares that he is merely a fellow servant with all those who bear witness to Jesus.

**IV. The Fate of the Dragon, Beast, and False Prophet: Rev. 19:11-20:10**

**A. Verses 11-16 present the Triumphant Christ in all his splendor.**

1. The blood sprinkled on his garment is not that of martyrs but his own – by which he has overcome and provided the victory to the saints.
2. The victory which Christ has won for his people proves that he alone has the right of rule over humankind: King of kings and Lord of lords.

**B. “The great supper of God” here contrasts with the marriage supper of the Lamb.**

1. The tables have been turned.
2. Vultures feed on the corpses of the defeated enemies of Christ and the church.

**C. The leaders of the worldwide rebellion against God’s Christ remain to be judged. Rev. 19:19-20:3**

1. The beast and false prophet, along with all who had the mark of the beast, were cast into the lake of fire and brimstone.
2. Satan himself (i.e. the Dragon) is bound and cast into the abyss for 1000 years.
  - a. The number 1000 has been used numbers of times in Revelation to signify completeness.
  - b. Binding him for 1000 years indicates that Satan is stripped of the terrible powers he exercised during Rome’s persecution of the church; such power is taken from him for the duration of the Christian Era.
3. Notice that Satan is “bound” but not killed. Cf. Rev. 13:7
  - a. As Rome fell, Satan was bound insofar as his powers on earth are concerned.

- b. The “binding” here is not to be equated with Matt. 12:29 or Col. 1:25.
- 4. The loosing of Satan at the end of the 1000 years is difficult to interpret.
  - a. Will he begin to create a world power on the order of Rome (i.e. hostile to the church) in the last days of the world? Rev. 20:7
  - b. Is his release merely a prelude to his final Judgment and consignment to hell?

**D. The 1000-year reign of Christ.**

- 1. This reign is in heaven rather than on earth; it is a reign shared with the martyrs of Rome’s persecutions, not all saints; this reign is not connected with the second coming.
- 2. The notion of a 1000-year reign of Christ on earth from Jerusalem is anti-biblical. Cf. Jer. 22:30; Matt. 1:11-12; Luke 3:27
- 3. The raising of the martyrs to vindication and glory is the “first resurrection”. Rev. 20:5
  - a. The Bible knows nothing of two bodily resurrections. Cf. John 5:28-29
  - b. No “second resurrection” is mentioned in the New Testament.

**E. At the end of the age, the enemies of God’s people are represented as being assembled again under the leadership of symbolic figures – “Gog and Magog”.**

- 1. The clash envisioned here may be the conflict of the gospel and error, or it may be the final gathering for Judgment.
- 2. It is the final conflict, and Satan himself is sent to share the fate of the beast and false prophet. Rev. 20:10

**Conclusion:**

- 1. No power can stand before the Almighty God.
- 2. The historical drama of the Apocalypse is ended.

**READING ASSIGNMENT FOR OUR NEXT LESSON:**

Read Rev. 20:11-22:21. The apocalyptic sections are over, and all that remains is a description of the final Judgment.

Below is an ancient Roman coin (a Sestertius) in the collection of the British Museum, minted at Tarraco in 71 AD during the reign of Vespasian (69-79 AD), declaring him to be the Pontifex Maximus (a title assumed by the papacy) which depicts the city of Rome as both the goddess Dea-Roma seated on 7 hills, and a she-wolf suckling Romulus and Remus (just above the R in ROMA).

